

REMARKS

The Examiner's Office Action of October 3, 2003 has been received and its contents reviewed. Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the consideration given to the above-identified application, and for indicating the allowance of claims 5, 6/5 and 11.

Claims 1-11 are pending for consideration, of which claims 1-5 and 8-11 are independent. By the above actions, claims 1-11 have been amended. In view of these actions and the following remarks, reconsideration of this application is now requested.

Referring now to the detailed Office Action, claim 7 stands objected to under 37 C.F.R. 1.75(c) as being in improper form because a multiple dependent claim cannot depend from another multiple dependent claim. In response, Applicants have amended claim 7 to change its dependency to the allowed claim 5. Further, the features of claim 7 are now incorporated in the amended claims 1-4, as shown above.

Claims 3-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Particularly, the limitation of "the other end portion" is deemed as lacking proper antecedent support. In response, Applicants have amended claim 3 and 4, as shown above, to correct the informalities. In spite of the amendment to claims 3 and 4, Applicants respectfully note that the phrase "the other end portion" should also be acceptable in view of the workpiece having two ends.

Claims 1-4, and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as clearly anticipated by Takeuchi (JP No. 57-48460 - hereinafter Takeuchi). Further, claims 2 and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as clearly anticipated by Masuda (U.S. Patent No. 4,062,150 - hereinafter Masuda). Still further, claims 6/1 through 6/4 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Takeuchi in view of Kojima (JP No. 63-185557 - hereinafter Kojima).

As previously mentioned, claims 1-4 have been amended to include the features of claim 7, which are distinguishable over the cited prior art references for the reasons provided below.

In a conventional system, a work or workpiece is captured and unloaded by the hand of a robot or the like. By this means, it is necessary to stop the rotation of the workpiece before capturing and unloading in order to prevent the scratching of the workpiece. As a

result, cycle time increases, since it takes more time to stop the rotation of the workpiece.

On the other hand, in the presently claimed invention, a workpiece is unloaded, as it is dropped down by gravity. More specifically, by retracting the regulating wheel in a direction that separates it from the supporting blade, the workpiece passes between the regulating wheel and the supporting blade and drops down. Thereby, the workpiece is unloaded, and the unloading is done without stopping the rotation of the workpiece. Hence, the cycle time does not increase.

Applicants respectfully submit that Takeuchi and Masuda clearly do not teach the feature of unloading by retracting the regulating wheel in a direction that separates it from the supporting blade so as to allow a workpiece to pass between the regulating wheel and the supporting blade and to drop down under the influence of gravity, as recited in the pending claims.

With respect to claims 8-10 of the present invention, these claims have been amended to further clarify the means for unloading a workpiece by gravity. More specifically, claims 8-10 have been amended to recite means for separating said regulating wheel from the blade and causing said work being machined to drop down by gravity and to pass between said regulating wheel and said blade, thereby unloading said work.

Applicants respectfully note that the means for unloading a workpiece is an allowable feature of claim 11, and that none of the cited prior art references teach, disclose, or suggest this claimed feature.

Consequently, since each and every feature of the present claims is not taught (and is not inherent) in the teachings of Takeuchi and Masuda, as is required by MPEP Chapter 2131 in order to establish anticipation, the rejection of claims 1-4, 9, and 10, under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as anticipated by Takeuchi or Masuda is improper.

The arguments set forth above in relation to the §102(b) rejections are also applicable to the §103(a) rejection of claims 6/1 through 6/4 and 8.

Claims 1-11 have been further amended, as shown above, to correct grammatical errors and to improve the clarity of the claim language.

In view of the amendments and arguments set forth above, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of all the pending rejections.

While the present application is now believed to be in condition for allowance, should the Examiner find some issue to remain unresolved, or should any new issues arise, which could be eliminated through discussions with Applicants' representative, then the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone in order that the further prosecution of this application can thereby be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,



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